

Planning Statement

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Proposed Use – Change of Use to Class C2

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Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

Date: 06 February 2025

Property: 7 Eastern Avenue, Reading, RG1 5RU

1. Introduction

This statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the change of use of an existing dwellinghouse (Class C3) to a Class C2 residential institution, to operate as a children's home. The proposal will provide a small-scale, managed residential setting for vulnerable children in need of care, within a sustainable residential location.

This statement also responds directly to concerns raised by the Local Planning Authority regarding:

- Loss of a family dwelling (Policy H7)
- Impact on neighbouring amenity



2. The Site and Surroundings

The site comprises an existing residential dwelling located within an established residential area.

- The property benefits from existing off-street parking
- No external alterations are proposed
- The surrounding area is entirely residential in character

The proposal will therefore retain the visual and functional character of the area.



3. Proposed Development

The proposal is for a children's home within Use Class C2 comprising:

- Up to 3 children (aged approx. 5–16 years)
- The home will be staffed at all times with sufficient appropriately qualified and experienced staff to meet the individual needs of the children placed within the home. Staffing levels will be determined in accordance with each child's assessed needs, risk assessments, care plans, and all relevant statutory guidance and Ofsted requirements. Staffing arrangements will be flexible to ensure the safe and effective operation of the home at all times.

The property will operate as a long-term residential home, providing stability and continuity for children.

The proposed use will operate in a manner consistent with a typical family household and will not give rise to unacceptable impacts on neighbouring amenity. The home will accommodate a maximum of 2–3 children, supported by a small and consistent staff team. The operational model includes a sleep-in staff arrangement, whereby one member of staff remains on-site overnight. This ensures continuity of care while also minimising staff movements during late evening and early morning hours. As a result, there are no night-time shift changes or additional vehicle movements, reinforcing that the property will operate in a manner consistent with a typical family household. There will be no external alterations, no signage, minimal noise, and limited vehicle movements. The proposal will therefore safeguard the amenity of neighbouring residents

¹. Operational Details

4.1 Nature of Occupation

¹ .2 Staffing and Management

- Children will live together as a single residential group
 - The property will be their primary home
 - Length of stay typically long-term (1+ year)
 - Shift-based rota system
 - Staff remain on site for extended periods (typically 12-hour shifts)
 - Minimises staff movement
 - Reduces disturbance compared to typical assumptions
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4.3 Daily Activity

The home will operate in a domestic manner, including:

- Shared meals
- School attendance
- Indoor living activities
- Routine household tasks
- No commercial activity
- No public visitors or drop-in use
- No external signage or institutional appearance

4.4 Traffic and Parking

- Existing parking is sufficient
 - Staff movements are limited and staggered
 - One house vehicle only
- Compared to a normal family:
- School runs, work trips, visitors etc. can be equal or higher

Traffic impact = comparable or lower than C3 use

The property provides sufficient parking spaces, appropriate for the scale of the use. Staffing is limited and staggered, resulting in low parking demand comparable to a large family household. The inclusion of sleep-in staff further reduces vehicle movements, as overnight staffing is accommodated on-site without additional arrivals or departures. The proposal therefore provides adequate parking provision.

To minimise the visual impact on the Conservation Area, the home will operate with a maximum of two staff vehicles parked on the driveway at any one time. Should additional staff attend the property, they will be required to use nearby public pay-and-display or long-stay car parks. The company will cover the full cost of parking for any staff member required to use these facilities.

Suitable nearby parking facilities include:

- Queens Road Car Park – approximately 5–7 minutes’ walk from the property (24-hour parking available).
- Broad Street Mall Car Park – approximately 10–12 minutes’ walk from the property (24-hour parking available).
- Q-Park Chatham Place – approximately 12–15 minutes’ walk from the property (24-hour secure parking).
- Saxon Court Car Park – approximately 12–15 minutes’ walk from the property (long-stay public parking).
- Reading Station Car Park – approximately 15–18 minutes’ walk from the property (24-hour parking available).

Each of these locations is served by nearby bus stops, including Kings Road, London Street Foot, Market Place, St Mary’s Butts, Friar Street and Reading Station Bus Interchange, providing regular public transport links to the area surrounding the property.

To further reduce the visual impact of vehicles within the Conservation Area:

- Staff will be encouraged to car share wherever practical.
- Public transport will be promoted and encouraged where practical and pay incentives will be in place.
- The company will implement the **Government Cycle to Work Scheme** for all eligible staff and actively encourage walking and cycling as sustainable alternatives to private vehicle use.
- Secure bicycle storage will be provided at the property for staff who choose to cycle to work.
- Shift patterns will be managed to minimise the number of staff vehicles on site at any one time.
- Visitors, contractors and professionals attending the home will be encouraged to use nearby public car parks.
- The property will retain the appearance of a traditional family dwelling with **no commercial signage, advertising, external storage or permanently parked commercial vehicles**.
- The driveway will not be used for the long-term storage of vehicles.
- The Director will be responsible for implementing and monitoring this Parking Management Plan.
- All staff will receive the parking policy and sustainable travel guidance as part of their induction.
- The Parking Management Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and continues to minimise vehicle movements.

This approach will ensure that no more than two staff vehicles are normally parked on the driveway, preserving the character and appearance of the Conservation Area while maintaining safe and effective operation of the children’s home. Electric vehicles will be provided to staff to minimise emissions and support environmentally sustainable operations..

5. Policy H7 – Loss of Family Dwelling

The proposed development will result in the change of use from a single dwelling (C3) to a smallscale children’s residential home (C2). While Policy H7 seeks to protect existing housing stock, the proposal delivers a significant and demonstrable social benefit which outweighs the loss of a single family dwelling.

There is a well-established and increasing demand for children’s residential placements across England.

According to the Department for Education, there are now over 80,000 children looked after by local authorities in England (<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/childrenlooked-after-in-england-including-adoptions>).

Over the past decade, the number of children in care has increased by over 20%, as highlighted in reports from the UK Parliament Education Committee (<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmeduc/430/43002.htm>).

In addition, the Department for Education reports that there are over 400,000 children classified as “children in need” (<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-in-need>). The National Audit Office has also identified a significant shortage of suitable placements (<https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/childrens-social-care-in-england/>)

The proposal results in the loss of a Class C3 dwelling; however, this is justified as follows:

5.1 Continued Residential Use

- The property remains in residential use
- It provides accommodation for vulnerable children

5.2 Main requirement

- Children’s homes
- Supported and care-based accommodation This is supported by National policy direction
- Increased demand for care placements

5.3 Social and Planning Benefits

The proposal delivers:

- Essential care infrastructure
- Stable accommodation for vulnerable children
- Positive contribution to the community

5.4 Balanced Planning Judgment

The loss of one dwelling must be weighed against:

Delivery of critical social infrastructure

Continued residential function

No physical or visual harm

Therefore, the proposal is acceptable under Policy H7

6. Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

This directly addresses the planner's concern.

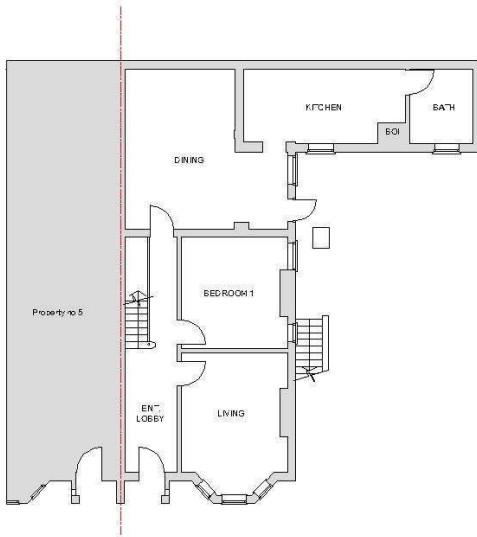
6.1 Residential Character

The scale of occupation is:

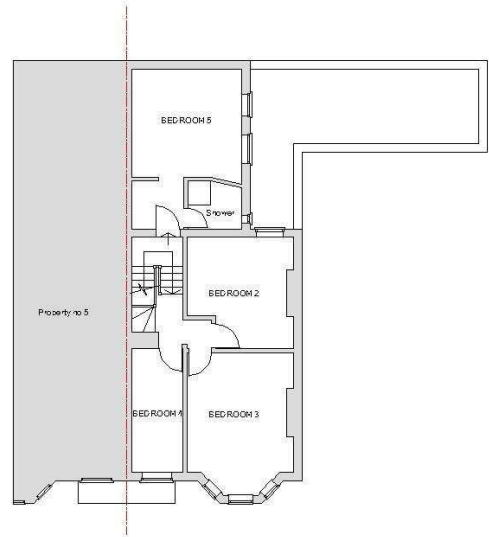
-
- Small (3 children)
 - Managed
 - Domestic in nature

□

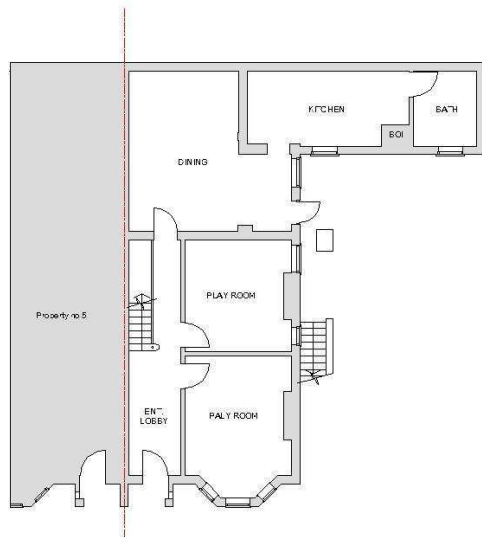
It does NOT function like an institution



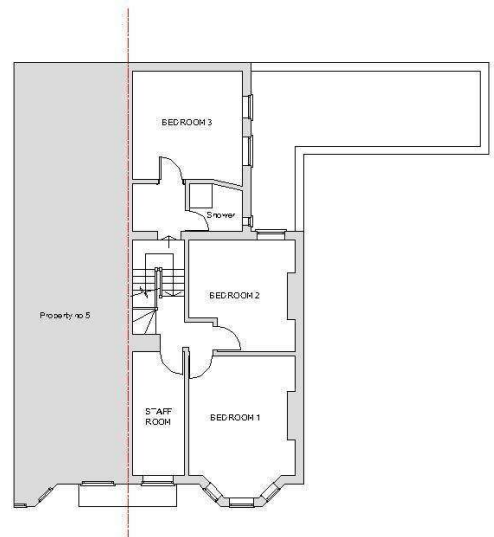
EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1:100



EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1:100



PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1:100

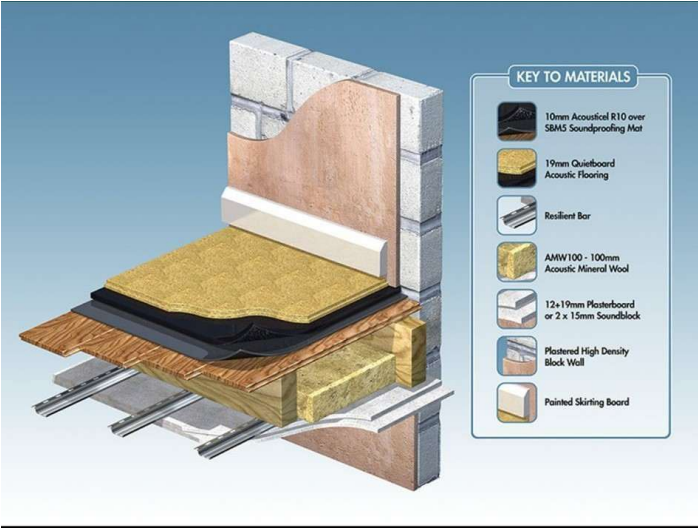


PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1:100

6.2 Noise and Disturbance

- No increase in noise beyond typical residential levels
- No external activity or gatherings
- Structured environment reduces unpredictable behaviour
- Staff shifts reduce frequency of movement
- No continuous flow of visitors
- Activity levels comparable to a family home

6.4 Privacy and Overlooking



6.3 Comings and Goings

- No changes to building
- No additional windows or extensions

No impact beyond existing situation

6.5 Key Comparison

		Proposed C2
Factor	Existing C3	
Occupants	4–6 people	3 children + staff
Vehicle trips	Uncontrolled	Structured & limited
Noise	Domestic	Domestic Managed
Activity	Variable	

The proposal is no more harmful than a normal dwelling

7. Planning Conditions

The applicant is willing to accept:

- Maximum of 2-3 children
- Submission of a Management Plan
- Retention as a single planning unit

8. Conclusion

Reading Borough Council has clearly identified the need to increase the availability of suitable children’s residential provision. Within its Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy, the Council states its intention “to work with providers so there is a sufficient and diverse range of homes within Reading” (Reading Borough Council, <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s32314/BFfC%2BChildren%2Bin%2BCare%2BSufficiency%2BStrategy%2B2024-2026%2Bfinal%2Bv2.pdf>)

This below is from a it is from a ‘Brighter Future for Children’s’ published document.

3.1 Suitability of placements

One of the guiding principles of the Company is that children and young people should have the opportunity to benefit from being part of some type of family. Figure 3 shows the placement type of our children looked after (CLA) cohort over the last year. Across the course of the year, an average of 77% children looked after were living in a family environment.

	Q1 22/23	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23
% of CLA cohort placed in family environment	78%	78%	77%	74%

Figure 3: % of CLA cohort placed in a family environment.

The BFfC Sufficiency Strategy of 2020-2023 had a target of 80% of CLA to be placed in a family environment thus this data would suggest at the start of the strategy for 2024-2026, the Company is falling slightly short of this target. The Company however, has strived to ensure that as many Children and Young People as possible are placed in Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs), where appropriate. With the inclusion of SGO reporting (figure 4), had these young people instead been CLA, the number of children placed in a family environment would be significantly higher. As children in SGO placements may have otherwise been CLA, when taking this into consideration, we therefore have 87% of our children living in a family environment (77% when considering the CLA cohort only); above the previous sufficiency strategy target of 80%.

The proposed development:

- Provides essential care accommodation
- Maintains the residential character of the area
- Results in no material harm to neighbouring amenity
- Justifies the loss of a C3 dwelling under Policy H7

The use is small-scale, well-managed, and comparable to a family dwelling in its impacts, and is therefore considered acceptable.